

Four Simple Ways to Be a More Effective Manager

Learn how to:

1. Organize your ideas with a mind map

2. Optimize your operations with a process map

3. Organize your team with a team chart

4. Manage your work with a project chart

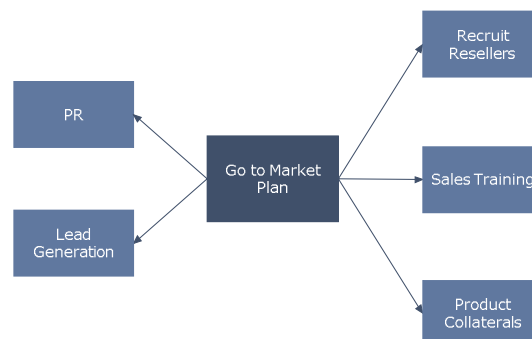
In growing companies, many of us find ourselves with “management” thrust upon us. We start out as a talented engineer, sales person, or other specialist; and, before we know it, there’s a team of people reporting to us, operational responsibilities, and a pile of projects to manage. And our boss assumes that because we were good at our area of expertise, we also know how to manage.

Management is just like anything else—it’s a learned skill. Thankfully, there are some simple techniques we can use to make us more productive and effective. Here are four of them that take very little time, but payoff big very quickly:

1. Organize your ideas with a mind map

Before you tackle a new project or decision, take a few minutes to list all the issues, tasks, and ideas you have. You can do this as a simple list with a word processor, but a much more effective way is to use a mind map. A mind map (or concept map) shows all topics around a central theme or idea graphically, with subtopics below each major issue. This makes it easy to get the “big picture” on your project. Here’s an example:

Components of the Go To Market Plan



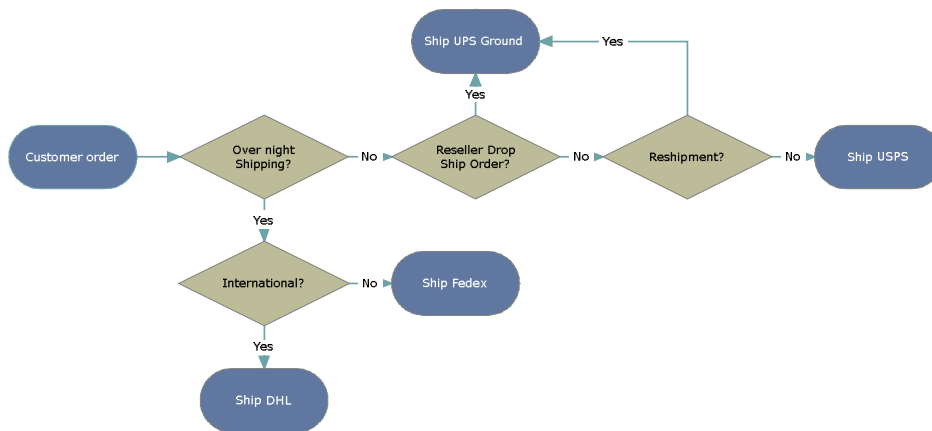
At first, this may seem like a lot of extra hassle, especially when you are eager to dive in and get your project done. But organizing your ideas first with a mind map can save you time and money down the line. A good mind mapping program will make it as easy to create a mind map as it is to make a list in a word processor. Plus, a mind map is superior to a list in that it allows you to easily move topics around and reorganize them as you think things through.

To learn more about how to create and use mind maps, download [Working Smarter with Mind Maps](#).

2. Optimize your operations with a process map

If you are responsible for some of the routine operations of your business, then you want the best possible outcome every time. For example, if you are responsible for shipping products to customers, you want to ensure that each order is handled promptly with the correct shipping method.

The best way to make sure this happens is by describing shipping as a *process*: a series of steps that are carried out the same way each time. Once you see the whole process, it's easy to identify ways that it can be improved. The most effective way to document a process is to create a process map (or flowchart). Here's an example:



This chart shows the process for choosing the shipping method.

Documenting a process has three major benefits:

- 1. You see the flaws and can fix them.**
You can't improve a process unless you can describe how it's being done now. Just the act of laying it out can identify problems and how to fix them. In the example above, the process maps show that four different carriers are used. Perhaps the process could be made simpler if just one were used.
- 2. You get a better and more predictable result.**
Following the same steps each time is the basis for quality and improvement. If the steps in this process are followed, all reshipments will have a UPS tracking number ensuring that a second shipment won't get lost.

3. **You can train someone to follow the process.**

Describing a task as a simple process and showing this as a graphic makes training much easier.

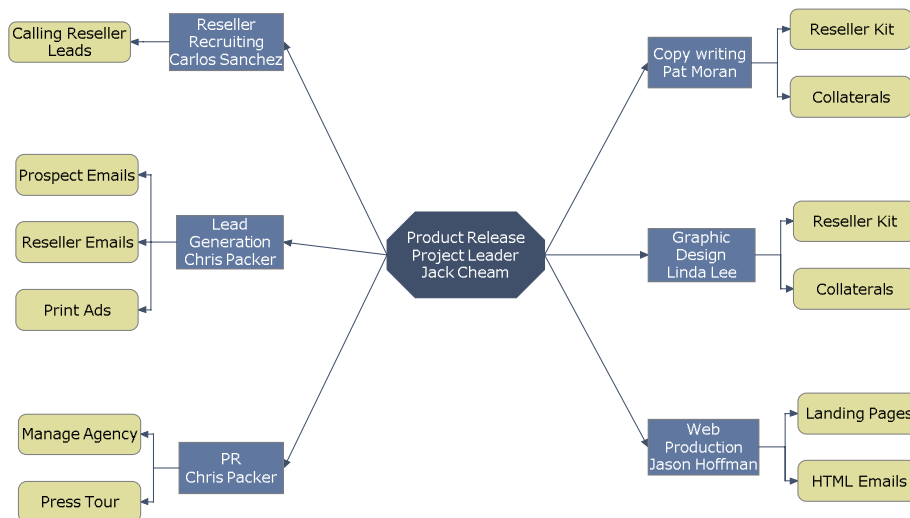
To learn more about how to create and use process maps, download [Working Smarter with Process Charts.](#)

3. Organize your team with a team chart

If your company is like most, there are two ways people are organized:

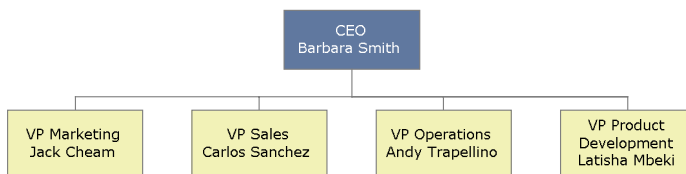
- Top-down reporting relationships, and
- Teams that work together on a project

Teams work more effectively when the roles and responsibilities of each member are clearly understood. The best way to make this absolutely clear is with a team chart like this:



The central position represents the team leader who is responsible for the project as a whole. The outer positions show the remaining members of the team and their specific responsibilities.

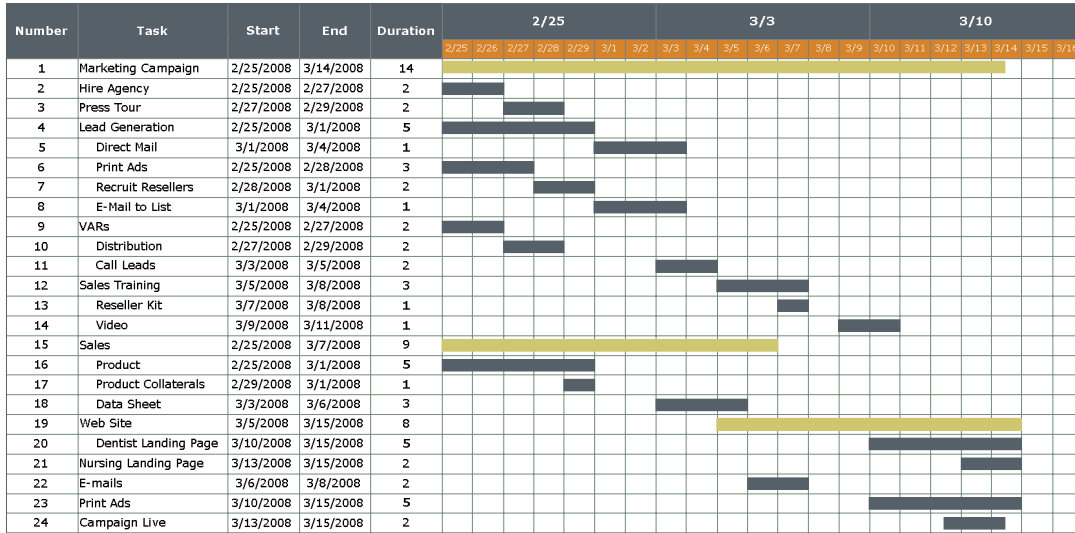
Top-down reporting relationships are also made very clear with the classic organization chart.



To learn more about how to create and use org charts, download [Working Smarter with Org and Team Charts.](#)

4. Manage your work with a project chart

Projects get completed on time when you can identify every task involved and the length of time each one is going to take. The best way to do this is to create a project chart (officially called a Gantt chart) that lists each task in a project with a start and end date. This allows you to see at glance the estimated completion date and your progress so far.



To learn more about how to create and use project charts, download [Working Smarter with Project Charts](#)

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